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# The Hour

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## THE HEALTH

### 'ROLLS ROYCE OF TATTOO REMOVAL'



Hour photo/Erik Trautmann

Dr. Joseph O'Connell's cosmetic surgery practice in Westport now features a new PicoWay laser treatment for removing tattoos and skin discolorations.

# Doctor rolls out PicoWay laser in his Westport office

## Today's Poll

Do you have a tattoo you would consider getting removed?

WESTPORT — If that tattoo you got when you were younger isn't holding the same charm it once did, the solution may be no farther than plastic surgeon Dr. Joseph O'Connell's Westport office.

O'Connell recently acquired what he called the Rolls Royce of tattoo removal in the form of the PicoWay laser.

"This is a game-changer in the skin-care world because the machine operates in the picosecond domain," O'Connell said. "A picosecond is one trillionth of a second. Because this is faster than the body's ability to absorb heat, there's no thermal transfer which eliminates not only the need for anesthesia and the recovery time as well."

Using a "Back to the Future" analogy, O'Connell said: "In 1985, 0.9 gigawatts was just enough to get Michael J. Fox "Back to the Future" and few would have guessed that just 30 years later we'd be using the same technology to remove tattoos and make our faces smoother and younger?"

The use of the laser in tattoo removal is nothing new, and according to the United States Food and Drug Administration: "With laser removal, pulses of high-intensity laser energy pass through the epidermis and are selectively absorbed by the tattoo pigment. The laser breaks the pigment into smaller particles, which may be metabolized or excreted by the body."

According to the American Academy of Dermatology: "The tattoo artist draws an outline of the tattoo on the skin. The gun makes very fast punctures in the skin with a needle that's got ink on it. The ink goes into the second layer of the skin, called the dermis. If it only went in the top layer, the tattoo would fade."

The difference between the new PicoWay Laser and the older laser technology, however, is that it delivers faster results, more comfortable treatments, and possibly fewer treatments.

"Previous tattoo removal by laser left scarring and ghosting," O'Connell said. "PicoWay does not disturb the top layers of the skin and it works internally by a novel mechanism known as laser-induced optical breakdown. Because of the picosecond delivery time, increased power can be safely delivered with minimal discomfort."

Prior to treatment, a numbing agent is applied to the target area and during treatment, the PicoWay handpiece "delivers energy with an extremely precise, high-power laser in extremely short pulses to target ink particles with great impact. These pulses shatter the tattoo ink into minuscule particles. Following the treatment, most of the ink particles are removed by the body."

"The treatments are administered one-trillionth of a second at a time," O'Connell said. "That's a millionth of a millionth of a second. To give you some perspective, a picosecond is to one second as one second is to 31,700 years and if you were to travel at the speed of light for a picosecond you'd only move about a third of a millimeter — in other words, it's incredibly fast."

"With the treatments that we've done, you can see the tattoo change in front of your eyes," he said. "We can treat our patients more effectively and deliver better results with added safety than in the past. We're thrilled to have the first PicoWay in Connecticut and our early patients have returned to full activities in less than 24 hours."

Pico lasers are a recent development in the aesthetic world that were initially created to erase tattoos and brown spots.

"It was found that Pico works on colored tattoos, so why not colored spots on the skin?" O'Connell said.

"This is fully FDA-approved for tattoos and benign pigment disorder."

About 90 percent of women have pigmentary issues in the skin and at least one study has indicated that this can add seven years to your apparent age, according to O'Connell.

"Thirty years ago we'd see patients for rejuvenation of the face, forehead and eyelids and we didn't have much more to offer. These days improving the color, texture and overall appearance of the skin is an integral part of plastic surgery and we have this discussion with all my facial aesthetic patients," he said. "While Botox and fillers like Restylane and Juvederm have been transformative, we can't ignore the overall appearance of the skin, which is the largest organ of our body. We start with medical skin care from ZO Medical, then follow with PicoWay, IPL and Fraxel, depending upon what we need to work on."

In addition to tattoo removal and pigmentation treatment, O'Connell said the greatest potential of the costly apparatus, with a price tag in excess of \$250,000, lies in reducing wrinkles and scars, collagen building and in treating color problems within the skin.

"By adding PicoWay to our longstanding intense pulsed light and Fraxel technologies we're now able to offer literally the entire spectrum of skin rejuvenation and color correction to our patients," he said.

O'Connell is a board certified plastic surgeon and he was recently named a metro area "Top Doc" for the 15th consecutive year. His practice at The Aesthetic Center on Post Road includes a comprehensive skin care center, body contouring with CoolSculpting and a state licensed outpatient surgical facility dedicated entirely to aesthetic surgery. His innovative technique for facelifting was recently featured in the August issue of *Aesthetic Surgery Journal*.

Information about PicoWay and The Aesthetic Center can be found at [www.plasticsurgeryct.com](http://www.plasticsurgeryct.com).